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The first Paper read was—

Narrative of an Exploring Expedition into the Interior of Western Australia, Eastward of the District of York, Commanded by HENRY MAXWELL LEFROY, Esq. (Superintendent of Convicts), from May to July, 1863.

THE object of the expedition was to discover new districts suitable for sheep-farming, the outmost station at present being Smith's, about three days' journey only east of York. It was found that primeval granite was the chief formation for full 6° east of York, occasionally fissured but nowhere upheaved, except towards the western face of Darling Range. This is covered in certain spots by sedimentary rocks, nowhere more than 100 feet in thickness. The general effect of the scenery consequent upon the (meridional) fracture mentioned above, is imposing, but their agricultural fertility is slight. From the Avon eastward to the limit of the drainage basin (118° 30' E.) the country is flat, with abundance of wide shallow valleys. Leaving Smith's Station the country improves, the grass being good, with a sprinkling of trees resembling the mimosa, and a species of dwarf pine. Animal life is so scarce, that in 155 miles the party only saw four kangaroos, three emus, and no natives; though they one day came upon a recent track of a solitary individual. On the numerous lakes passed, there were noticed only four ducks, and neither cockatoos, turkeys, nor parrots. As they proceeded inland they came upon a chain of lakes bordered by samphire plains, at present 10 feet above the level of the stream, but probably less in the rainy season. Beyond this a rise of 5 feet in the lake waters would probably inundate a tract five miles wide. A careful examination led to the conclusion that there had been no overflow for many years, possibly for centuries, and that for several winters the average depth of the water had not reached 2 feet. Some fine cypresses were visible here. If grazed closely by sheep, the young grass would be of the most nutritious quality, the depth of the rich alluvial soil being 15 feet, as evidenced by numerous natural surface-drains. Little or no wind was experienced throughout.

THE PRESIDENT said the Paper had been curtailed with reference to the geological phenomena of the region in question, which, as a geologist, he almost regretted. The idea of the author seemed to be, that there was a mass of granite here, the nucleus, as it were, of the original formation of the globe, which had remained undisturbed for many ages. It was a phenomenon which ought to be discussed in the Geological Society. The Paper was one of merit, written by a gentleman who had passed a period of twenty years in the colony, and who had no doubt made accurate observations upon the country. He had also brought forward clear proofs that there were in this

region large tracts of valuable alluvial land, which might be cultivated with great profit to the colony.

General LEFROY said, when his brother told us, with the experience of a settler of more than twenty years in West Australia, that the region he had been the first to explore contained an extent of valuable agricultural and sheep-farming country unequalled in the colony, it opened up some good news to those who were well-disposed towards that unfortunate colony. His brother dwelt very strongly upon this point, particularly upon the extraordinary richness of the granite in those felspars which were the element of agricultural fertility, wherever they were found. There was also great interest in the view which he announced as to the possibility of our having in this portion of the Australian continent access to the primeval nucleus of our planet, the primeval granite over which there has never been any great depth of sedimentary deposit, which has never been disturbed by fissures or disrupted by intrusive rocks, and which is nearly in the condition in which our globe would have been originally if it had been a granite sphere cooling gradually. Mr. Lefroy was deeply impressed with the evidence presented in many directions of the extreme antiquity of this region. We find in the vegetation of Australia the living representatives of the most ancient vegetation of the globe. It is the same with a portion of its animal kingdom, and also with its representatives of the human race. For example, the only native Australians met with by the expedition was one female and her child, both in a state of absolute nudity. The extraordinary sparseness of the human race, and the very peculiar conditions under which they exist there, point to a degree of primitive simplicity and antiquity which he thought would be found of considerable interest hereafter. Houseless through three-quarters of the year, perfectly naked in all weathers, and distributed over the country at a rate probably not exceeding one family to forty or fifty square miles, it is difficult to conceive of human beings in a deeper state of degradation. "Man," says Mr. Lefroy, in one of his letters, "is here only another species of the mammalian fauna who has the singular property of being both carnivorous and graminivorous, and is as unconscious of traditions, laws, moral principles, and social institutions as the scanty kangaroos or emus who share the country with him." The language of this female was unintelligible to the native from York who accompanied the party. No kindness could overcome her terror, or induce her to accept what they offered her. Having no personal acquaintance with Western Australia, General Lefroy could not venture to say how far his brother's anticipations of a beneficial change in the vegetation of those great plains, to be brought about by cattle-feeding, would be realized; but it would appear that a moderate expenditure of labour would remove the curse of aridity by saving the abundant water which is sent by heaven, but, in the singular conformation of the surface, finds no valleys to drain it off, no basins to collect it, and no depth of soil into which it can subside. It seems to evaporate with the minimum of benefit to the earth. The expedition had suffered much, both from the want of this necessary and from the muddiness of what they could collect. On one occasion they were 36 hours without it; but, notwithstanding this, he was glad to say they lost only two or three horses, and returned themselves all the better for their hardships.

The next two Papers related to New Zealand, and were therefore read consecutively. They were respectively entitled—

(a.) *Expedition to the West Coast of Middle Island, New Zealand (Otago Province).* By JAMES HECTOR, M.D., &c., and